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SOURCES METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2005

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INTERROGATION

on 5 April 1961, in Minneapolis, Minn.

Gerda (she pronounces it "Yarda" POLITIKOVS (she herself uses "Politiks"), 63 years old. She arrived in the US at the end of October or beginning of November 1960.

The discrepancies in the spelling of her last name are explained by the fact that at different times and in different countries her name was differently spelled in her documents. Her husband was an officer-mechanic [machinist?] in the Tsarist Navy. She is a Finnish Swede. Even now she speaks Latvian with a very strong accent. Probably she did not speak Latvian at home, but Russian.

After World War I she and her husband came to Latvia. Since the early 30's and during the whole Soviet period they lived in Kalnciema pagasts. In the early 30's a group of new farms was organized on the Tirela marsh, about 5 kilometers from Mangali (about 70 farms), one of which they acquired as their property. This group of farms was in the midst of a forest and swamp region, the Kalnciems road was 10 km and the Riga highway was 14 km [away]. (I did not try to find out what she actually meant by these roads).

At the beginning of the collectivization period, the Kalnciema Kolkhoz did not want to incorporate this group of farms because of the great distance and poor connections. For this reason they were incorporated in the large sovkhoz of Babites Rayon -- the Salienes Sovkhoz, with its center at the Pinku estate. Later on two kolkhozes

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were incorporated in this sovkhoz -- Raina and Komjaunstnes. In general there was a tendency to incorporate the weaker kolkhozes into already existing ones, or to transform them into new sovkhozes.

The above mentioned group of farms was considered as an independent [working] brigade in the Saliennes Sovkhoz. A former farm owner (former "Aizsargs") was the brigade leader during the entire period. He organized the work very competently and in accordance with local conditions. Therefore the sovkhoz management resisted any attempts to get rid of him as a former "Aizsargs". He did not accept an offer to transfer to another job, as he wanted to live in his home and work in a place where he was familiar with the conditions. The sovkhoz management consisted alternately of Russians and Latgallians.

The task of this brigade was to raise calves and colts, and to grow vegetables and fodder. They did not have any milch cows (with the exception of privately-owned ones) because of the difficulties of milk delivery. The reared calves and the produced fodder were regularly delivered to the Pinku estate, where they had built large cattle sheds. There they also had large greenhouses for providing the city of Riga with vegetables.

The difficulties in providing Riga with green and root vegetables appear from the fact that the [representatives of] hotels and restaurants used to come all the way to the farm of Mrs. P. for potatoes. The potato buyers were even prepared to dig for the potatoes. After several attempts to do so, the brigade leader would not permit this any more, as the work was done too superficially and they were inclined to leave

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the small potatoes. Mrs. P. does not know of such an official practice that only the potatoes from the top are gathered up and the others are later secretly (in the dark) dug up by individuals. Mrs. P. personally noticed how the potato buyers tried to make a "deal" with the brigade leader, who categorically refused to do so.

Politikova worked as a colt breeder. Colt raising was gradually reduced and finally discontinued completely, since the number of horses in Latvia was reduced. They said that all the raised colts were being sent to Korea. During the last few years she did not work any more.

As a former farmer's wife she did not receive any pension, but she avoided a direct statement that she was able to get along. She only said that she had a cow, some pigs, and chickens, and what else does an old person need.

According to Mrs. P., the sovkhoz workers' wages were not dependent on the harvest, as in the kolkhozes, but were definitely fixed. The wages were based on output norms, which in turn varied according to working conditions. For example, if the potatoes are good, a full daily wage norm would be 15 boxes at 50 kg each; if the potatoes are small, it would be 10 boxes. In addition, there were bonuses for good work; for example, if the harvest was good, the tractor operators [get a bonus] for good preparation of the soil. The brigade leader was troubled most of all by truants, as they prevented him from fulfilling his work schedule. He always stressed that he would not refuse anyone who asked for a day off, if necessary, but that they should

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tell him a day in advance. This indicates that there was a great deal of truancy even among salaried sovkhoz workers.

Among city residents, the system of "talka" [helping the farmers with the harvest] was very unpopular. Beginning with the 6th grade of school, (she was not quite sure about the grade), the pupils had to work [on the farm] during the month of September in order to help with the harvest. This was done in such a way that the school officially began on 1 September, on which day everyone had to appear. From the school, the pupils of one grade, or of the whole school, were sent to the assigned work area. Mrs. P. believes that the pupils receive some payment for their work, as she had read in the paper that the pupils of one grade promised to use the money earned for a joint excursion to Leningrad. In general, excursions are very popular in Russia.

The nearest school to Mrs. P.'s residence was 10 kilometers away. Her neighbor's children remained there for the whole week in a dormitory, where they received 3 meals a day for a certain amount of payment. Before her departure this school was being enlarged for the purpose of transforming it into a so-called "boarding school". In general, there was great demand for boarding schools, but because of the shortage of buildings there were still relatively few of them. For the time being, mainly orphans were admitted to these schools, as well as semi-orphans and children who had been taken away from their parents because of the latters' incompetence. The Russians make their children learn Latvian in school, so that later on they may have no difficulty in occupying the best positions in Latvia and displacing the Latvians.

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Even without knowing the language, the Russians are trying to get in everywhere. Mrs. P. had some business at the Jelgava post office; even there [the employees] were Russians. Her emigration matter had to be handled at Raina bulvaris (Cheka). In one of the offices there a young woman employee knew Latvian, Russian and English, but in another department there was no one who understood Latvian. (She had not even heard about the Soviet Latvian Foreign Ministry). There are many salesmen in the stores who do not know Latvian. Usually, if the customer asks for something in Latvian, they answer in Russian that such an article is not available. Mrs. P. personally had such an experience in a newly opened crockery store on Lenina iela 105. One gets the impression that Lenina iela, as compared with Brivibas iela, has a different numbering system. I believe the present number 105 is the former 93. There is some strange combination [of numbers]. The numbers 93 and 97 belong to large buildings facing the street, but behind them is a good-looking [private "osobnyak" [detached house] - number 95, where the house owner VITTE lived. In 1940/41 all the buildings were occupied by some Cheka unit. Even now there are some Russian officers in the "osobnyak". As far as I understood, one of the daughters of Mrs. P. now lives at the present number 105.

Mrs. P. does not know whether the Salienes Sovkhoz had any trouble with tractors or other machines. (Vicinity of Riga and possibility of doing business with farm produce ! -- my comment). The only way for the workers in her brigade to have any contact with the outside world was by using the sovkhoz trucks, whenever they came to the farm to pick something up. The necessary food supplies were

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brought once a week by sovkhoz truck and one had to take whatever was available. The bread was also brought at the same time. No home baking was done even in such a [far -away] spot in the forest.

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